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Files Show Tests For Truth Drug Began in O.S.S. Marijuana Derivative Reported Used

The following article is based on reporting by John M. Crewdson and Jo Thomas. It was written by Mr. Crewdson.

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LOS ALTOS HILLS, Calif., Sept. 4 — Documents on file in a small college museum here indicate that the American intelligence community's research on the control of human behavior focused as long ago as 1943 on ways to induce people to tell the truth against their will.

The documents, recently discovered by Senate investigators, are personal papers compiled by a one-time military intelligence officer, now deceased.

They show that in the middle of World War II, the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency, began highly classified experiments, apparently conducted in some cases on unwitting subjects, that were intended to measure the potential of marijuana derivative as a truth serum.

The references to a search for a so-called "T-drug" that might break down the psychological defenses of Axis agents subjected to questioning by Allied counterintelligence officers are contained in diaries and correspondence of George Hunter White, who rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the O.S.S. and after the war had a flamboyant career as a senior Federal narcotics official.

Hearings Delayed for New Data

Among other things, the White papers call into question recent assertions by the C.I.A. that official interest in the properties of mind-altering substances in this country arose only in the postwar period, and then only as a response to reports that the Soviet Union was investigating the use of drugs as aids to interrogation.

A Senate subcommittee on health and scientific research has been gathering material on a variety of postwar C.I.A. projects relating to mind control, and the panel announced on Friday that hearings scheduled for later this week on that topic had been postponed because new information had become available.

A statement issued by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts who is the subcommittee's chairman, said the panel's investigators wanted more time to study the White papers and other newly available documents. These, it said, included some 10,000 pages discovered in the voluminous archives of the C.I.A. itself. A spokesman for the agency said that some of those documents also date back to 1943.

The papers of Colonel White, who retired from the Treasury Department in 1965 and died at his northern California home of a heart attack a decade later, were made available to the Kennedy's committee by officials of Foothill College here, where they were sent after death. College officials also provided them to The New York Times.

The White papers, some of which are apparently classified, show that a few of those persons involved in the O.S.S. experiments, including Colonel White himself, continued after the war to aid the C.I.A. in its search for a workable method of psychological command and control. This work was conducted under such code names as Project Bluebird and Project Artichoke.

Cited Mindszenty 'Confession'

Central Intelligence Agency documents describing these and later projects, thousands of which have been made public by the agency over the last few weeks, have contained extensive references to the unexpected "confession" of Josef Cardinal Mindszenty, the Hungarian who surprised the world by admitting to a number of political crimes at his celebrated Budapest trial in 1949.

Former senior C.I.A. officials involved in the agency's efforts to isolate chemical, hypnotic or surgical techniques that would produce a "Mindszenty effect" have cited the Cardinal's baffling performance as the event that set off American concern over the potential for the clandestine use of such methods by a hostile foreign government.

According to Colonel White's wartime diaries, however, some of which are stamped "SECRET" in bold red letters, the first such experiments, with a marijuana derivative he identified as tetrahydrocannabinol acetate, were begun in Washington in May 1943 with the colonel himself volunteering to smoke a cigarette laced with the chemical. The result of that test, he reported, was "to knock myself out."

Further experiments with the marijuana extract concerned the feasibility of administering it to an unknown subject not only in ordinary cigarettes but also in candy in a vapor composed of carbon dioxide gas and, apparently, in specially impregnated facial tissues to be thrust upon unsuspecting enemy agents.

maintain, however, that Del Gracio, whom it identifies as a "well-known New York hoodlum" with whom Colonel White had become acquainted in another context, was used as an unwitting "guinea pig" in the 1943 experiments.

Consultant to C.I.A.

Mr. Del Gracio, a late associate of Charles (Lucky) Luciano, then an important organized crime figure in the New York area, negotiated with Colonel White and others for the release of Mr. Luciano from prison in 1943 in return for his promise to cooperate with Allied intelligence services. A deal to free Mr. Luciano was never struck.

In 1954, when the circumstances surrounding the Luciano matter became the subject of an inquiry by William B. Herlands, then the New York State Commissioner of Investigation, Colonel White was a Bureau of Narcotics official stationed in New York. The year before, he had signed on as a consultant to the C.I.A. in its postwar drug-testing program.

Using the pseudonym Morgan Hall, Colonel White had rented an apartment at 81 Bedford Street, in Greenwich Village, where, according to C.I.A. officials, the chemical LSD, then little understood, was being tested on unsuspecting people lured to the apartment.

Mr. Herlands's questions about the experiment involving Mr. Del Gracio and whether it had involved the search for a truth drug apparently aroused some alarm in the C.I.A. An entry in Colonel White's diary for May 12, 1954, reports that Sidney Gottlieb, a biochemist and longtime C.I.A. official who directed the agency's research into psychological warfare techniques, had telephoned from Washington and advised him "to go slow on Hall Oper [operation] in view of Herlands's quiz."

But the threat that the inquisitive commissioner might stumble onto the C.I.A.'s testing of LSD apparently abated, and the experimentation continued in various forms and places for nearly two decades.

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